

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State vs. North Alabama – November 14, 2023

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Jimmy Bell Jr, when he transferred here, he probably had a new goal in mind of what his role was going to be. With Tolu out, what was his mindset knowing he was going to have more responsibility?

CJ: "That would be for him more. I haven't seen a big change in his mindset. He's been pretty business like since he's arrived. He's been there, done that kind of guy. There are some things we've got to work on – he's not getting low enough in the post. Some guys that are as heavy as him are holding their own a little bit. You got to leverage it a little bit better. He missed a couple of short hooks that I thought normally he would make. He missed a couple free throws we thought he'd put in as well. He's logging more minutes than he's probably used to, he probably didn't expect that. He's certainly gaining confidence in the system. Our other players and our coaches are gaining confidence in him too."

Q: To have a senior guard like Shak [Shakeel Moore] coming off the bench at the end of the half and settles things down, what is the luxury of having a veteran guy like that?

CJ: "Yeah, it's almost to the point now where I'm cognizant of the minutes a little bit, who am I going to put in next and who's the next sub. We're going to have to work all that out with the injury situation. More decisions we've got to make in the game, but especially up front when we're fully healthy, we've got lots of different options. We've got to continue figuring that out as we go forward. I thought Shak looked comfortable out there, I knew he would. I love to see him knock down that open three, and he got to the paint a couple times. I thought there in the second half, he had a couple chances to get his hands on balls that he normally does. For whatever reason he didn't, but it was nice to have him back."

Q: Do you see Andrew Taylor settling in more now that you've got these three games under your belt?

CJ: "Yeah, I think so. He's getting more comfortable on the court. There's new surroundings and a new role. He had a different role at Marshall. He could shoot almost any ball he wanted, and there's no consequences, where around here that's not the situation. We're trying to take our best shot, work together on offense and take shots that make sense for us. There's definitely an adjustment."

"With the defensive standard that we have, he has gotten way better on that end. Tonight, he had some good ones. But then, he just wouldn't finish the play. Like he'd guard him, guard him, guard him, and the last dribble he would quit with it. He's just got to finish each slide, each closeout or each possession, whatever the case may be."

"At least from where I sit, he just looks a lot more comfortable. I think people are starting to see he's not just a shooter. He's a player. He's crafty. He knows how to play, and he's really good in ball screens. He's got unbelievable finishes around the basket that we can't take any credit for."

Q: Did you see a spark come from your team after the double techs and in the second half?

CJ: "Again, from where I sat, what stuck out to me was Cam [Cameron] Matthews. His on-ball, he got a deflection and he got a dunk. I'm glad he did it, but I was really disappointed with the first four or five minutes until he flipped that switch, because the intensity wasn't there. We didn't come out of the locker room breathing fire. We came out of the locker room like the game was over. Certainly, that's not what you're trying to do."

Q: *What do you anticipate about that trip to the Hall of Fame Classic in Connecticut?*

CJ: "I'm looking forward to it. We need a day off. We'll end up playing five games in 12 days, and that's a lot. You think about the regular season or the SEC season where you're playing twice a week. So, do the math. That's a lot of games to start because we didn't start on opening day. We had a gap of two days [starting Wednesday versus Monday last week]."

"So, we're going to play five games in 12 days. You don't have a lot of down time once the games start with how our schedule unfolded. So fortunately, we've got a complete day off tomorrow, which everybody needs. Everybody needs a day away from the grind, to take care of their business and get a little more refreshed. Then, we'll have a couple days to prepare for two games back-to-back, but we're going to play for a championship."

"I'm sure every team that's in the tournament will all have the same mindset. It's going to be great competition. I can't wait to get up there, see how we compete and see how we handle the neutral sites and the size. The size will be different. It'll be Power 5 type size, Power 5 players, and I'm looking forward to the experience."

Forward Jimmy Bell Jr. and Guard Andrew Taylor

Q: *What has been your mindset when you knew your roles were going to change?*

AT: "Just being more focused coming in, Tolu [Smith] told me I'm going to be a big part of the team. I appreciate that coming from an All-American type player like him. I didn't come here to try and replace him. I came here to be myself, and I know I've got a big responsibility."

Q: *You scored nine points to get going a little bit. What's it like to have you and Shak [Shakeel Moore] coming off the bench and to have that leadership?*

AT: "Yeah, I feel like that's been a part of my going throughout. From freshman all the way to senior year [at Marshall], I just feel like I'm here having to step up to be more of a leader. I just continue to try and be more vocal. Communication is key. Having energy every day and every day pushing through, it's part of being a leader."

Q: *What goes through your mindset those first couple of games to keep your confidence up and having a night like tonight?*

AT: "I feel like you can't really control your misses, but you can control your work ethic and your energy toward the basketball looking at the rim, squaring your shoulders up and letting it fly. Even if you do miss, you've got the rest of the team to help you get through the game and come away with a 'W'."

Q: *It's your second double-digit rebound game this season, what do you kind of tribute that hot start that regards this season so far?*

JB: "I didn't have a good rebounding [summer]. So, I worked on getting good position, getting low on rebounds and just chasing the rebounds."

Q: *Early the second half, the team was ahead 38-35 after having a big lead in the first half. What was Coach Jans message to you guys to lead through the rest of the way?*

AT: "I feel like energy and effort was a big part of it. There's a part where we're kind of dead. We knew we're going to win, but we had to put on some gas to complete the plan."

Q: How big is it for the team to have D.J. Jeffries start knocking down some shots and make it go offensively?

JBj: "D.J. is a big part of the team. Whenever someone on the team has a bad shooting night, we just tell them to keep shooting. That's the kind of support we've got on the team. Everybody trusts each other on the team to make the next shot, and we continue on with the next play."

Q: Talk about with Shak and D.J. and some of the guys that have been around here a while. How much you all looked at those type of guys for guidance and leadership?

JBj: "Yeah, they've been here like you said under Coach Jans. So, we came in and just wanted to fit the system knowing what Chris Jans wants and knowing what he needs on defense. We're wanting to provide that for him and the team to win games."

AT: "Yeah, I agree with that. Just seeing guys like Tolu [Smith] and D.J. every single day, Shak works his butt off on both ends of the court. So, just having models like that raises my level of intensity."

North Alabama Head Coach Tony Pujol

Q: What can you say about the effort from your team in SEC country here against Mississippi State tonight?

TJ: "First, I've got to start by congratulating Coach Jans, his staff and his players. This is one heck of a team. I think they're going to do really, really well in the SEC. I thought tonight our guys came out and got off to a slow start. I think the fact that the first test on the road against a really quality opponent, we got off to a slow start. But once we settled in, I thought even in the second half when we're down by one possession, I thought our guys had settled in. So, credit to them. They kept executing, and we just didn't perform the way we needed to perform in opportunities we had. There were opportunities there for us to take, and we just didn't take them. Again, a lot has to do with the way that they disrupt you offensively. So, a lot of credit goes to Mississippi State."

Q: Coach, this team showed a lot of fight after they went down 13 in the first half. To start the second half, immediately cut it to three, what about the poise your team kept showing and kind of finding responses?

TJ: "Yeah, I mean that's been this team. We talk to this team a lot about the preparation they've gone through. Now, once you're prepared and already been there and you've done it now, it's time to perform. It's time to just to come out here and display it. I thought for most of the game they did. Again, I thought Mississippi State did a great job of disrupting us offensively. Then, for them offensively, I thought going inside to their big kid [Jimmy Bell Jr.] down the stretch and the way they ran their action, I thought they executed at a high level."

Q: Coach, they had a great student section back behind me. How much does that prepare you guys when you go on the road like this in a tough SEC environment?

TJ: "That's the best part about having that energy in the building. There's no question in my mind their players fed off of that energy. I know we do whenever The Vault is in town. It's rocking and rolling. By the way, we're going to need them on Saturday because we've got Jacksonville State coming in. You know what type of game that's going to be. So, I think right now, we've got to do is look at everything in this game. We need to get ready to move on and get ready for Jacksonville State. So, believe me, we're going to make sure we lock in on the things we need to address and go out there and perform on Saturday."